

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MANAMA 00685 201052Z
ACTION SS-25

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P R 200942Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5956
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY DOHA

S E C R E T MANAMA 0685

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UNSC, PEPR, PBOR, IS, LE, BA

REF: STATE 69250

1. MADE REFTTEL POINTS TO AMIR MARCH 19 AND, ADJUSTED TO CIRCUMSTANCES, TO FOREIGN MINISTER EARLY MARCH 20. AMIR FELT UNROLE UNLIKELY TO RESOLVE PROBLEM BUT WOULD NOT OPPOSE IT IF SYRIANS AND LEBANESE FELT IT WOULD BE USEFUL. AMIR SAID HE WAS SORRY FOR LOSS OF ISRAELI LIVES AS WELL AS FOR THE DEAD IN LEBANON. SAID HIS LONG-HELD FEAR THAT PALESTINIAN RADICALS WILL BRING RUIN TO ARAB WORLD IS CLOSER THAN EVER TO COMING TRUE. AMIR WAS DEPRESSED ABOUT EVENTS IN AREA AND SAID HE WOULD

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NOT REPEAT HIS USUAL PLEA TO ME THAT USG TAKE STRONG ACTION TO MOVE PARTIES TOWARD PEACE. HE SAID HE HAS COME TO REALIZE THATC SG MAY BE WILLING BUT IS IN FACT UNABLE TO PURSUE ITS OWN BEST INTERESTS IN MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE OF ISRAEL'S GREAT STRENGTH IN AMERICAN POLITICS.

2. I REPLIED THAT LEBANESE SITUATION HAS DIVERTED ATTENTION

FROM CORE ISSUES BUT THAT USG DETERMINED TO PRESS ON WITH ITS ATTEMPT TO MOVE PARTIES TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. I OPINED THAT OUR SWIFTNESS IN MOVING LEBANESE CRISIS TO UNSC MAY REFLECT PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO RESOLVE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION, OR BE CLEARLY ON ROAD TO DOING SO, BEFORE TALKS BEGIN WITH PREMIER BEGIN IN WASHINGTON. WE DO NOT WANT LEBANON SITUATION TO DIVERT OUR ATTENTION FROM PEACE PROCESS ANY MORE THAN IS ABSOLUTELY UNAVOIDABLE.

3. SINCE NEWS OF UNSC ACTION CAME BEFORE MY MEETING WITH FONMIN MARCH 20 WE DISCUSSED WIDER ASPECTS OF LEBANSE SITUATION, INCLUDING IMPENDING ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING AND ARAB SUMMIT REPORTED SEPTEL. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE FELT IDEA OF UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE WAS BEST OF A SET OF BAD ALTERNATIVES. HE SAID ANYTHING WHICH MOVES ISRAELIS OUT OF LEBANON QUICKLY IS DESIREABLE. OTHERWISE, THEY WILL STAY ON AND ON UNTIL, OUT OF HABIT, THEY HAVE ABSORBED LEBANON SOUTH OF THE LITANI RIVER. HE WONDERED WHY SOVIETS HAD ABSTAINED WHEN SYRIA WAS NOT OPPOSED. I SAID SOVIET ACTION MAY HAVE BEEN IN RESPONSE TO PLO'S OPPOSITION TO UN FORCE.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER RETURNED FEW DAYU AGO FROM TWO WEEKS VACATION IN U.S. (NEW YORK, AUSTIN AND ASPEN) AND SAID HE FELT THAT FROM WHAT HE HEARD AND OBSERVED THERE THE PRESIDENT SIMPLY IS NOT IN POSITION AT HOME TO MOVE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS TO SUCCESS. HE CONTINUED THAT SADAT INITIATIVE
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PROBABLY BEYOND REVIVAL; ONLY EVENT THAT COULD POSSIBLY PUT LIFE BACK INTO IT WOULD BE DRAMATIC CARTER-BEGIN CONFRONTATION WHICH WOULD PUT GREAT DISTANCE BETWEEN USG AND GOI ON KEY ISSUES SUCH AS SETTLEMENTS AND APPLICABILITY OF 242 TO ALL FRONTS. HE SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT SUCH AN OUTCOME BECAUSE OF INCREASED STRENGTH ISRAELI LOBBY HAS GAINED FROM TERRORIST ACTIONS AND CONTROVERSY OVER AIRCRAFT SALES. BEGIN WILL UBE TERRORIST ATTACH AS MEANS TO DIVERT DISCUSSIONS FROM PEACE PROCESS AND PRESIDENT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET AT REAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT A FIGHT, WHICH FOREIGN MINISTER DOES NOT FEEL USG IS UP TO FACING.
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